

Article

Mutual Benefit: How Vocational Training Programs Utilize Employer Engagement and Refugee Strengths to Facilitate Integration

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Abstract: Successful integration of newly arriving refugees requires the engagement of the receiving community and active facilitation of integration through provision of employment, access to housing, and protection of basic rights. Understanding how local entities effectively facilitate integration is important for policymakers and scholars interested in identifying best practices and replicating outcomes. This study examines the integration outcomes of refugees who participated in a vocational hospitality training program in Chicago, Illinois between 2008 and 2012. In particular, we explore the integration experiences—using employment, housing, and homeownership—of Bhutanese origin refugees who represented the largest country of origin group in the hospitality course. We find that the Bhutanese refugees who participated in the course had high rates of homeownership, stable employment, higher wages and experienced socioeconomic upward mobility—positive indicators of integration. In our analysis, we identify three reasons the program is successful in facilitating integration: a practice of selective enrollment, active employer engagement, and informed industry selection. Importantly, our findings suggest a positive benefit for employers in addition to refugee employees.

Keywords: integration; refugees; employment; vocational training; community engagement

1. Introduction

Successful integration can only take place if the host society provides access to jobs and services, and acceptance of the immigrants in social interaction. (Castles et al. 2002)

Integration scholars have called attention to the need to understand integration as a two-way process. Importantly, scholarship has highlighted the role that the receiving society plays in facilitating and enabling newcomers to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to the society as a whole (Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010). Refugees are in a somewhat privileged position in the United States because their protected status entitles them to particular forms of social protection and social services (Castles et al. 2002) designed to facilitate settlement and integration. Yet, despite this, refugees exhibit concerning outcomes in several domains of integration. Refugees demonstrate persistently high rates of poverty, welfare receipt and dependence, as well as occupational downgrading (Bollinger and Hagstrom 2004; Borjas 1999; Connor 2010; Gordon 1987). Refugees also suffer from higher rates of chronic health conditions and mental health ailments than other immigrant groups or native-born Americans (Kinzie 2005; Marshall et al. 2005; McBrien 2005).

Given this, understanding where integration is occurring and identifying why processes that do work are effective is important. In doing so, policymakers can potentially establish and replicate best practices. Further, analysis of outcomes might help scholars understand what form integration takes for contemporary migrant groups.

This paper uses a Chicago-based refugee vocational training project as a case study to understand and explain the program's role in facilitating effective integration. In particular, we focus on the experiences of one country of origin group—the Bhutanese—who represented the largest single group of participants during the study period. We focused on one group of participants in order to ensure that we were able to identify how the program within the local context facilitated integration, rather than a by-group comparison of experiences. The Midland Hospitality Program¹ trains refugees in a six-week program for jobs in the hospitality industry. Refugees receive job placements directly after participation. The program has and has had a job placement rate between 75 and 100 percent over the last ten years in jobs that pay on average 1.5 to two times the minimum wage. Interviews with previous participants suggest sustained employment, high rates of homeownership, enrollment in continued education programs, and job satisfaction.

Through analysis, we have identified three program-specific factors that contribute to these outcomes. First, the program is an effective factor in facilitating integration because it is optional and selective. The program targets participants who have a history of and interest in employment within the field of hospitality. This skills match is important as it avoids placing overly qualified refugees in manual work, and, instead, compliments the skills the participants already have. Second, the program is built on community engagement. Hotel human resources representatives, and training staff, co-teach the program with the instructor, and contribute to development of the curriculum. The course instructor is, in addition, a former hotel staff person with intimate knowledge of the workplace culture and norms. The continuous engagement with employers ensures the program matches the curriculum with the current needs of the industry, and their buy-in encourages hiring. Third, we find that the program facilitates integration because it has targeted an industry that offers livable wages, and, in most cases, a fixed schedule. This allows for refugees to support themselves and, in many cases, to use those resources to pursue goals outside of work. Refugees are better able to lead multifaceted lives as a result.

The paper proceeds as follows. We review the relevant literature on integration processes, focusing on integration for refugees in North America. We then discuss the methods and data used before a multiscale exploration of the research context, including an overview of the program and resettlement site. We then segue into a discussion of outcomes and our explanations for observed outcomes. In our discussion that follows, we highlight the significant aspects of this program that we identify as important to facilitating integration.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Applied Understandings of Integration*

This paper asks about the integration outcomes of refugees in Chicago. The term integration was selected to describe the process of incorporation of refugees because of its use by practitioners and within the academic literature. Integration is the term employed by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to describe both an intended process and outcome of the resettlement programs offered in third country resettlement nations (UNHCR 2017). The goal of integration is to build “independent and productive . . . members of their communities” (UNHCR 2017, p. 11). UNHCR evaluates the following dimensions of integration: employment, legal, social, and cultural dimensions, while asserting that individuals should be able to preserve their own cultural identities (2017).

UNHCR's definition recognizes integration as a bidirectional process; refugee integration requires both adaptation on the part of the refugee, and hospitality and adjustment of the local population and government. To achieve integration, UNHCR suggests that refugees should be provided with language

¹ The name of the resettlement agency has been changed for purposes of anonymity.

and vocational training, employment, and education programs (2017). UNHCR recognizes these facilitators in order to suggest that particular legal and social processes should be institutionalized to help with the process of integration (UNHCR 2017).

2.2. *Integration in the Literature*

The use of the term ‘integration’ by scholars is less widely accepted. Academics and scholars, whose work focuses on the well-being of migrant groups and their opportunities post-settlement, have used a series of terms to describe the process of settlement and adaptation. Integration has replaced absorb, assimilate, incorporate, and acculturate as the most commonly accepted term (Castles et al. 2002, p. 12; Korac 2003; Phillips 2006). Yet, despite widespread use in the literature and in policy, the use of the term integration has been widely critiqued. This is due to its roots in assimilation theory. Assimilation theory, and its modifications, hold that over time migrants acquire normative cultural values that allow them to become fully integrated (and indistinguishable) members of mainstream society (Gordon 1961). Critics offer three main criticisms of assimilation theory and its variants. One, it assumes that migrants must abandon cultural markers in order to gain acceptance, and two, it treats mainstream society as a homogenous cultural entity with a shared unifying culture. Finally, assimilation theory and scholars of integration tend to ignore structural barriers to integration that prevent particular groups from fully integrating, and yet puts the onus on newcomers to do so (Alba and Nee 1997; Da Lomba 2010).

However, the term integration has been modified more recently to reflect these critiques. In the definition employed here, from Castles et al., integration is used to describe the process “through which newcomers become a part of society” (Castles et al. 2002). This definition as used reflects the adaptation and adjustment of both the receiving society and arriving newcomer (Korac 2003). The definition incorporates both structural aspects of integration, and individual or cultural aspects often called acculturation (Phillips 2006). While admittedly broad, this definition encompasses a full range of processes at the individual and societal level that facilitate the process and offer identifiable metrics for measurement.

Importantly for this research, within this interpretation of integration as with that of UNHCR, scholars have identified the importance of the actions of the host society in facilitating the integration of newcomers (Alba and Nee 1997). Refugees and migrants require access to welfare benefits, housing, jobs, and education, in line with citizens to become accepted members of the host society. Participation in these aspects of life promotes and facilitates integration through exposure, social network formation, ensuring economic stability, and equal rights. This interpretation understands integration to be active and not passive on the part of state and local actors (Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010).

2.3. *Noted Domains and Facilitators of Integration*

While the definition is contested, there is more agreement about what indicates integration. As summarized by Jennifer Hyndman, “the de facto indicators of integration include employment status and earnings, official language abilities and educational attainment, legal or health status, and housing careers” (Hyndman 2011, p. 7). These, or similar, domains have been built into the dominant frameworks meant to serve as analytic tools for explaining and assessing integration (see Ager and Strang 2008). Scholars frequently assess the degree of parity with the native population, migrant satisfaction, or migrant representation within institutions as benchmarks of integration.

In addition to domains of integration, the literature identifies facilitators of integration. In their “Conceptual Framework of Integration” Ager and Strang—the first to widely employ the term—define facilitators of integration as actions, of the host society typically, that remove barriers to integration (Ager and Strang 2008). Their research identifies language and cultural knowledge, safety, and stability as facilitators (Ager and Strang 2008, p. 182). Providers who facilitate language acquisition, for example, facilitate the integration of refugees by providing them with greater opportunity for employment and social incorporation. Their research draws attention to the ways in which the process is two-way,

e.g., the state provides language classes while the individual participates, facilitating their integration or inclusion.

2.4. Local Context of Integration: Understanding the Context of Reception

The context in which refugees are resettled influences their opportunities for and constraints on integration (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015). Common domains of integration, such as housing and employment, are impacted by the realities of the local environment, such as housing and labor markets, availability of social services, and history of and co-ethnic presence (Castles et al. 2002). Whether an area has received refugees previously can affect the community's response to newly arriving groups and the availability and quality of refugee-specific services, i.e., translation. Further, the ethnic composition of the locality and the relationship of the refugee to that racialized structure influences both the refugee's membership and perceived membership in the social environment (Nagel and Staeheli 2008). The refugee's social and structural inclusion or exclusion can affect the opportunities provided to them.

2.5. Contributions of This Research

Building on the research of Ager and Strang (2008) and Hyndman (2011), this research uses the example of the Midland Hospitality program in Chicago as a facilitator of integration. We focus on the trajectories of refugees who participated in the program in the five years after arrival. Drawing attention to the context of reception, we note that the program is effective because of its location within Chicago, a city (discussed below) with ample employment opportunities in hospitality, which offer livable wages and benefits packages. We find graduates of the program experience stable employment, wages, quality of life, education, and home stability and ownership five years after completion. Noting these outcomes, we identify three attributes of the program through which the program is effective in facilitating integration for the refugees who participate.

3. Methods and Data

The approach to research was qualitative in nature. We employ three distinct data sources in our analysis. First, we use data from the hospitality program itself quantifying who participated in the program, their graduation, and placement rates. We use this to evaluate employment placement (location, date, wages) and retention.

Second, we combine analysis of this data with findings from semi-structured interviews conducted as a part of a larger research inquiry into resettlement outcomes. We interviewed 62 refugees and 55 stakeholders between 2014 and 2015. These interviews included individuals who participated in (refugees and asylees) or worked on (human resources directors (3), case management and language training (4), job placement workers (7), managers (1), and vocational instructors (1)) the program between 2008 and 2012.

Refugees were identified and referred (after consenting to participate) for interviews by staff at Midland Allegiance resettlement agency. Snowball sampling was used to recruit further participants. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the author, except when participants declined to be recorded. Transcription was done simultaneously with interviews, allowing the author to identify themes and to incorporate them into further interviews. Analysis of rent costs and wages were conducted using Excel.

The major populations being resettled during this period were Iraqis, Burmese, and Bhutanese, and, consequently, those are the largest groups represented in the interview pool in that order. A smaller number of individuals were interviewed who had arrived from other sending countries. These include: Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Guatemala, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, The Philippines, The Republique de Congo, and Sudan. (See Table 1 below for numbers of each). Since the research focused on employment and housing outcomes as an indicator of larger integration, the interview pool includes only individuals

who were considered 'employable' by the agency. This means that everyone interviewed fell between 18 and 65 years of age. Interviews were held with 62 individuals in 37 households.

Table 1. Interviewees by gender and country of origin.

	Male	Female
Bhutan	6	2
Burma	9	8
Republique de Congo	1	1
Guatemala	0	1
Cote d'Ivoire	0	1
Eritrea	2	2
The Philippines	0	2
Haiti	1	1
Iran	1	1
Iraq	18	6
Sudan	1	0
Total	39	23

Interviews were used to explore housing and employment outcomes five years post arrival. The interviews followed a fairly formulaic structure; however, because they were open-ended, the content varied greatly. The focus was on developing an understanding of their employment and housing trajectory, in particular where they lived and worked, and why. From each interviewee we gathered their housing history, including: location, size, cost, composition of building, satisfaction, their relationship(s) with their landlords, search tool, number of residents, and tenure. We also gathered employment histories, including: location, employer, title, salary, length of employment, and satisfaction. Interviewees' basic demographic details were also collected, including: languages, family size, social network, education, and country of origin. Additional topics depended on the interview, because of language capacity, program participation and the interest of the focus of the interviewee. These included: use of institutions (schools, agencies, citizenship, and training), arrival and resettlement history, and the conflict history of their country of origin.

All refugees interviewed were known to the researchers prior to their interviews. This introduces a level of bias we are aware of and may suggest that participants were positively selected since they agreed to participate, largely based on their relationship with the agency and researchers. However, the researchers were dependent on the agency to identify interviewees, and the participants to agree to interviews. This determined the interview pool. Despite this, we believe these interviews are somewhat representative of the larger population based on knowledge of the experiences of other former participants amassed over eleven years, and the similarity in demographics of these individuals to other participants.

Within this data set are interviews with eight individual Bhutanese, of whom six participated in the program in 2009 and 2010. We present long-term integration outcomes for that subset. We chose the Bhutanese from those years because, during those years, the Bhutanese were the largest country of origin group in the hospitality program and we believe their experiences are indicative of those participants generally. The standards for admission mean that refugees and asylees who participate have prerequisites (work experience) and meet a minimum language standard. Thus, we think that we can generalize somewhat about the experiences of others who participated based on shared levels of human capital, timing of participation, and type of job placement.

Finally, we use agency records supplied by Midland to establish a comparison group. These employment records showed agency job placements for non-hospitality participants ($n = 825$). This data allowed us to analyze differences in overall wages and job placement rates, and, in particular, for Bhutanese within and outside the program ($n = 121$). Contained within this data are the job

placements made by the agency by individual, including: country of origin, wage, start date, 90-day retention (Y/N), location of employment, employer, and gender.

Additionally, this paper is the product of a collaboration between a current and former Midland staff member who worked on the Hospitality program. One researcher worked facilitating post-program job placements for a period of six years and the other has run the training program for eleven years. These experiences provided background knowledge and introduction to the policy and practice of resettlement, a core aspect of which is training and job placement. Through autoethnography and an extended case study (Hyra 2008; Burawoy 1998), these experiences are incorporated here.

4. Research Context

The Hospitality Program admits only refugees and asylees and, as such, it is important to establish who refugees and asylees are before discussing the program in-depth. Refugees are persons who have been displaced and are outside their home country, who cannot return home due to an established threat based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (Bruno 2011). Refugees in secondary nations are eligible for third-country resettlement, local integration or repatriation. Refugees who participate in the Midland Hospitality program were resettled through the United States' third country resettlement program. Through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), refugees are eligible for settlement and post-resettlement assistance (Bruno 2011, 2013). Refugees receive financial housing support for 90 days. At 90 days, refugees are expected to be economically self-sufficient (the goal of the United States Refugee Admissions Program) and therefore able to support themselves (Bruno 2011, 2013). They are responsible for their own living costs at that time. Midland provide uniform services, including job training and placement, to facilitate the accomplishment of this goal.²

Asylees are persons who receive protective status (legally equivalent to refugee status) after arriving in the United States (Bruno 2011). Asylees are entitled to the same benefits and services.

4.1. Reception within Chicago: A History of Immigration

Midland is located in the Northside of Chicago. Chicago is a port of entry city, an immigrant-landing pad with near constant arrivals of migrants. For the majority of the last century (1880 to 1960), Chicago was second only to New York in the size of the migrant population. As a result, the city has both an established older migrant population—largely white ethnic—and newer migrants. The city is presently 20.7 percent foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2018).

In addition to serving as a landing pad for voluntary migrants, Chicago has a long history of serving as a refugee resettlement site and maintains an active resettlement program. Since 1975, a total of 139,588 refugees have been resettled to Chicago (Illinois Department of Human Services n.d.; Singer and Wilson 2007; U.S. Department of State 2019). Between 2000 and 2500 refugees are resettled to Chicago annually (U.S. Department of State 2019; Singer and Wilson 2006, 2007). Five refugee resettlement agencies in the city and two located in the suburbs provide resettlement services.

4.2. Midland Allegiance

Midland Allegiance Refugee Services is one of the five agencies in Chicago and was the focal agency of this research. Midland administers the Hospitality program, and, in addition, is a mid-sized refugee resettlement agency. Midland resettles approximately 250 refugees and serves about 40 asylees annually, both with case management and job placement services. The agency provides vocational training and language courses to a much larger population of recent migrants, asylees, and refugees

² The United States' approach to resettlement is built around the concept of economic self-sufficiency. The Refugee Act of 1980 Refugee resettlement agencies identifies economic-self-sufficiency as the precursor to other forms of integration (Bruno 2011).

at two sites (totaling up to 2500).³ Midland services additionally include refugee reception and placement, job training and placement, vocational training courses, youth programming, English language classes, and an array of case management services. During the study period, 2008–2012, Midland predominately resettled persons originally from Bhutan, Burma, and Iraq, but also provided resettlement services to significant populations of East Africans (Somalis, Eritreans, and Ethiopians) as well as persons from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

4.3. An Overview of the Midland Hospitality Program

Since 2007, Midland Allegiance has offered a six-week vocational training program run by a former industry insider (a concierge who now teaches at Midland). In the course, offered four times per year, refugees learn the expectations of the American workplace, as well as the language and behavior needed to be successful in a luxury hotel. Through tours with partner employers, the course takes refugees into the 'back of house' of at least three hotel properties and offers hands-on practice in a mock hotel room at the agency (furnished with goods donated from luxury hotels in Chicago). Human resources representatives from partner hotels conduct mock interviews with refugees during the course, and training staff teach sessions on how to comport oneself for success and job expectations, and coach workplace behavior. Additionally, during each course, two former participants return to teach sessions that the instructor describes as essential to the success of participants. Former participants who have been successful help to "demystify" the workplace and provide culturally competent, critical insight into how to be successful.

Admission to the course requires English, some relevant experience, and willingness to work in the field. While most participants are newly arrived refugees and recent asylees, participants can also be refugees resettled previously who have held consistent employment in a related field since arrival and who have improved their English since arrival. This is an important note: all refugees and asylees who participate have human capital that increases their employability and differentiates them from the majority refugee population. The majority of participants during the study period were Bhutanese refugees and African origin asylees coming largely from the Horn of Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

4.4. Outcomes

As a result of admissions criteria, effective training, and employer partners, refugee participants have found work at higher rates within this industry than elsewhere. The agency trains approximately 25 people in four sessions annually (a total of 100). The program is an important bridge for initial job placements; in 2019, refugees have been placed in work at 27 different hotels. The placement rate for 2018 was 74%; 85 individuals enrolled, of whom 72 graduated and 63 found work at hotels with an average salary of \$18.59 per hour (2019 dollars). Those who graduated without a hotel job were by and large employed elsewhere. For FY2017, the 90-day retention rate was 88%.

Focus Group: Bhutanese

In order to evaluate the integration experiences of program participants, here we focus on a subset of participants: the Bhutanese population. Bhutanese refugees were displaced from Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s and resettled to Chicago between 2008 and 2012 ([Ranard 2007](#); [U.S. Department of State 2019](#)).

The Bhutanese refugee population was displaced from southern Bhutan into refugee camps in Nepal and are often referred to as Lhotshampa or Southerners ([Ranard 2007](#)). Many Bhutanese refugees remained in these camps for as many as 25 years. Within the camps, refugees were largely prevented

³ Since changes in the administration of the program post-2016, refugee arrivals were significantly reduced nationally and Midland is no exception.

from working, but the population had access to basic education, which included English language training. As a result, the UNHCR estimates that as many as 35% of Bhutanese refugees had a degree of English fluency and a sizable percentage were literate (Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2014). Additionally, the majority, 60%, of the resettled population was between 15 and 44 years of age (Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2014). Consequently, when resettled, many Bhutanese refugees had the key attributes necessary for employment in Chicago: they were working age, fluent in English, and had basic literacy.

This combination of attributes, spoken English language and basic literacy, youth, and eagerness to work, positioned this group well for the Hospitality Program and positions in the field of hospitality. More Bhutanese found work in the hotel industry than any other field. Of the 121 Bhutanese placed in jobs by Midland between 2008 and 2012, 41 placements were in hotels.

The initial Bhutanese job placements in the hospitality industry were entry level and required manual labor but they paid well and required a short commute. Of the Bhutanese placements, 27 were room attendant positions, 10 were dishwashers or stewards, the remainder: banquet houseman, spa attendant, and minibar attendant. This breakdown was largely by gender; women held most room attendant positions while men held all stewarding positions. Salaries in the hospitality field are often double minimum wage. This is in part because Chicago's hotel industry is heavily unionized. Thus, even those hotels that are not unionized must keep wages high enough to remain competitive. The starting salary averaged \$12.68 per hour (\$14.04 in 2017 dollars) and employers offered benefits. Additionally, most employees had a fixed schedule that allowed them, for instance, to attend school and enroll children in childcare. Hotel work was located almost entirely in hotels downtown; only two were provided work elsewhere, one in Evanston and one in Rosemont. This meant a short commute to downtown via the Red line, 25 to 35 min, for those living in Rogers Park.

Not all Bhutanese refugees were eligible to participate in the course. The job placements and wage data of those refugees placed in other industries offers a comparison group. Many older Bhutanese, those with less English, or work experience (i.e., less relevant human capital), were ineligible for the course or consequently placement at hotels. They found work in other sectors with noticeably lower wages. Of the other 80 placements, 14 were in food preparation, 15 in airport janitorial, nine in manufacturing, six in meat processing, and seven in customer service. The food preparation positions paid an average of \$9.03, the manufacturing paid \$9.02, and the meat processing paid \$10.30 in 2017 dollars.

5. Longitudinal Participant Outcomes

5.1. Bhutanese Hospitality Participants

To analyze longitudinal outcomes, results from interviewed Bhutanese participants are analyzed here. Participants interviewed five years post arrival (and approximately five-years post-program completion) experienced increases in economic stability and increased socioeconomic mobility indicative of spatial and socioeconomic integration. Bhutanese refugees had increased wages, been promoted, and used increased assets to purchase homes. Refugees had also moved in order to reconstitute their family and social structures, which facilitated their socio-emotional stability. The hospitality program was an important bridge to initial job placements that provided longer-term social mobility.

5.2. Home Ownership and Employment Stability

The Bhutanese families interviewed had primary earners who had maintained their employment and received wage increases or promotions. Though eight people were focal interviewees, 12 adult members of their families participated in the interviews and their information is reported here. Five of 12 had originally found work through the hospitality program and all still worked in hospitality. The initial jobs paid an average of \$12.40 per hour (in 2017 dollars). The minimum wage, for comparison,

was \$9.27 in 2010 (in 2017 dollars). At the time of interviews, in 2014/2015, this group was paid \$14.96 per hour (in 2017 dollars), while the minimum wage was \$10.34 in 2017 dollars. Additionally, some of the interviewees had sought and found improved work in the field. One individual had transferred 'up' into a Houseman position from a Steward and was being considered for a promotion to supervisor. Another had moved between hotels, after 3.5 years, for an increase in pay.

I am a banquet houseman. I started in April 2010. We attended the Midland Hospitality class and they placed us there. I got a job in the restaurant (at the same hotel) originally. Working mornings. My wife is still there (in the restaurant), along with three other refugees placed at the same time. My wife is a breakfast attendant. I work full time from 6–2. My wife is full time.—Interview 2015

Bhutanese families used increases in wages and financial stability to purchase homes. Four of these former hospitality participants had purchased homes with their families. These Bhutanese families had purchased homes in the first three to five years since arrival. They had paid between \$158,000 and \$219,353 (in 2017 dollars).

The home we purchased, it is five bedroom, six full bath, dining room, huge, and sitting room. My mom can cultivate some activities in the backyard, and we are living here everybody, except my stepmom. She is living in my uncle's home, and my oldest sister got married, but Kali is here. And I have a daughter and my wife is here. You know, Audrey, the same house if I had to buy in Chicago, I couldn't find with this price, but here I find a home. Almost like 500 [Bhutanese] people they bought a house in Georgia. They own homes. There are some that have like grocery stores, some have their business, they're happy here. The people from the beginning they're happy here. Good community. They have some programs with mom, cultural programs with music and a DJ.—Interview 2014

5.3. Other Interviewees Longitudinally

Other interviewees who did not participate in the hospitality program received the same case management and job placement services from the agency. The mean wage at the time of interviews, 2014/2015, for the non-hospitality participants (30) was \$12.40 in 2017 dollars. This is lower than the mean wage for hospitality participants during the same period. Of the group of interviewees, 37 households, nine had purchased homes, including five hospitality participants (four Bhutanese and one Iraqi), meaning that four other families had purchased homes. These families were Iraqis who purchased in the suburbs or North Chicago and one Guatemalan asylee. Twenty-three of the interviewed family units had moved into apartments that were bigger than the initially provided apartments, including the four home purchases. In short, other families also showed economic gains and increased housing stability. However, the wages earned were slightly lower overall for non-hospitality participants as was the rate of homeownership.

6. Explanations

The long-term housing and socioeconomic stability of the individuals interviewed here suggests spatial and economic integration processes are occurring. The Hospitality Program is an important factor in facilitating these outcomes. Our inquiry identifies three reasons why the program is effective. The program involves employers in the planning and orchestration of the training and the program is taught by a former employee who understands both the industry culture and hiring expectations; the hospitality jobs within Chicago that the program targets offer living wages and benefits; and the program screens refugees carefully to ensure they have prerequisites and interest in the industry.

6.1. Employer Engagement and Intimate Industry Insider Knowledge Makes Training 'Useful'

I think for us it has been really good to partner with agencies like Midland . . . to guide us in how to help people transition into the American workforce. And we work hard, we help prep them for the interview . . . it's not just making the interview, because if they interview really well, but can't do the

job, then they'll fail. I'd rather set someone up from the beginning to do well. And this is top tier. This is the most difficult hotel to work in. This is the top of the most qualified! We set them up to be the best they can do.—Human Resources Director, Luxury Hotel 2015

Human resources (HR) management, like above, highlight the importance of their participation in training. Participation affected the hiring decisions they made and in the preparation of the refugee participants for work. HR staff, through participation in the training program, help refugees to understand the expectations of the American workforce. In these sessions, and the curriculum, trainers focus on explaining the workplace culture of a Chicago hotel and the timing and flow of the workday. These insights enabled refugees to understand normative behaviors, such as how to interact with a supervisor or expectations for taking a break. Refugees felt better prepared to keep their jobs by the intensive preparation led by knowledgeable insiders.

Second, the HR director above highlights her role in preparing refugees for the interview. The American interview is a particular cultural phenomenon, one which is new to recently arrived refugees and one for which HR staff are particularly prepared to instruct applicants. She, and others like her, use these mock sessions to work with migrants on their curriculum vitae (CV) and on their self-presentation. She addresses such questions as, "Tell me about yourself", a question refugees struggle with due to the type of abstraction. Further, refugees found these sessions helpful in understanding how Americans expect an interviewee to balance humility with self-marketing. The preparation and practice in these sessions helped refugees to understand the interview experience in advance and to respond appropriately.

Finally, refugees are hired annually by the hotels who participate in the program. Participation in the program gives the HR staff preferential selection. One participant commented on his pathway to employment, "You took me to the Peninsula. Looking at my shoes and my smile, they hired me . . . I was working there, almost 2 and a half years. Three years almost." This participant was recognized on a tour of a downtown luxury hotel, not solely because of his smile or his shoes, but because of his engagement with the human resources director and his command of English. Later, he was hired when he did well in the interview and his CV spoke to his relevant experience. The casual interaction in the tour, however, helped broker a later interview. These experiences are an important aspect of the program and often give individuals an inside track to employment. Engagement with the hospitality community is central to the effectiveness of the vocational training and placement program.

6.2. Livable Wages and Permanent Work Promotes Long Term Economic Stability

We [pay] at \$16 [hourly wage] and change. The union [pays] \$16 and change and we're a dollar more. But it's not just that, it's the benefits. We get two weeks after one years. We have three weeks after five years and four weeks after ten. You can take it as you accrue them . . . We pay short term disability. We offersix personal days, eight holidays, floating holidays . . . that's the biggest perk. Life insurance for everybody, it's basic but everybody gets it. The 401K, everybody gets it. It's really nice . . . the 401K is portable so if you leave this work, you earned it, you keep it, after 1250 hours or one year. And then you're fully vested after five years.

As far as opportunities, I've seen people come in as a room attendant, a lot of times I see people come in and want to go to school. You'd see a lot of times they go to school and we try to help out with the schedule. They go to work in the morning and go to school in the afternoon. We see them come in and move into a supervisor role, then a manager role.—Interview, Human Resources Director 2015

The mean salary and benefits package offered by Chicago hotels better positioned refugee employees for upward mobility. Refugees who were able to find and keep work in this industry initially made more than their peers in other industries, and, over time, saw pay increases that increased the difference in wages. The presence of the union in the industry helps to support livable wages by pressuring non-union hotels to offer competitive wages. Higher wages promoted socioeconomic stability and home purchase, facilitators of integration.

Additionally, the fixed schedule offered by hotel employment allowed refugees to engage in other activities outside of work. Although refugees were unable to select their schedules, generally because of seniority requirements that dictated who could choose their hours, refugees did have set schedules. This meant that refugees could attend school, church, or spend time with their families. This was important to refugees as they sought to rebuild or form new communities and, more broadly, to provide time for socialization. Refugees were able to build community, rebuild and reestablish (versions of) their former lives, and more successfully resettle with a fixed work schedule.

The agency targeted this industry based on knowledge of the wages, demand for employment, and industry contacts. The program was designed to fill a known, specific need for employees with particular attributes in Chicago. As a result, the program is useful for both participants and hotels.

6.3. The Skills Match between Refugees and the Program Builds on Prior Skills, and Does Not 'Degrade' Overly Qualified Refugees

The hospitality instructor is attuned to the needs of the industry and hiring standards. She has incorporated these into her screening tool that is used in selecting and enrolling refugees and asylees in the program. She individually interviews each applicant and requires that they furnish a CV. Refugees must have English and some prior experience in the field. Further, she has fine-tuned the interview to include a focus on managing refugee expectations. In the past, refugees, often refugees with professional work experience, expected to find customer service or non-manual labor work after program completion, e.g., front-desk clerk. These jobs are highly competitive, however, and so the instructor is careful to delineate precisely the type of work and hours that will be available. She uses the interview to understand the individual's willingness (and availability) to work in these jobs, overnight, or on weekends. In this way, she is better able to enroll individuals who will be successful. This promotes better course completion rates, job retention, and ultimately long-term employment.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has used the case study of the Midland Hospitality program, with a focus on the Bhutanese population, to analyze how the program contributes to the successful integration of refugees. The longitudinal analysis of participant outcomes gives unusual insight into how local actors can facilitate the integration of new populations. The analysis highlights the key finding, which is that agencies with active employer engagement can be effective in facilitating socioeconomic and residential integration. Significantly, the program uses knowledge of industry needs to fill a community gap: trained staff who will retain their jobs over time. For refugees, the program positively facilitates their integration, contributing to their ability to purchase homes, pursue school, and support family.

Castles et al. (2002) identify the need for the receiving society to actively facilitate integration. The Midland Hospitality program is an effective example of employers playing this role while actively benefiting. Employers may act out of charitable motivations, but ultimately their involvement benefits their own organizations financially, decreasing turnover and increasing quality of hire. This highlights one of the understated truths of Castles' statement that integration benefits all.

It is beyond the scope of this research to comment on the process of acculturation or the psychological adaptation of refugees thought to accompany the socioeconomic integration of refugees. However, prior scholarship has reflected on the process of socioeconomic integration for refugees (Phillimore and Goodson 2008 for instance) and the importance of socioeconomic integration to other forms of integration. Phillimore and Goodson's work evaluating the process has affirmed the need for both stable housing and employment as precursors to psychological and social integration. Their research in the U.K. found that, for refugees, having a stable home was the 'symbolic' end to a journey and was associated with feelings of increased security (p. 316). Employment was stated by refugees as the second most important factor in helping refugees to "feel at home" (p. 314) and having a job was said to "help establish social roles, develop language, cultural understanding, social connections, and a sense of security" (p. 314). The research presented here affirms the importance of

these two factors as components of a larger, multifaceted process of integration. Clearly, the program is not the sole contributing factor, as human capital also plays a significant factor as do the specifics of the job and individual characteristics. Given the established relationship between types of integration, however, the hospitality program serves a role as a facilitator of other forms of integration.

This research is a good first step in understanding the process of integration for refugees. Further research would benefit our understanding of whether refugees are experiencing other forms of integration. In particular, while employment and housing indicators suggest that integration is occurring, further analysis could offer more insight into former refugees' feelings of acceptance and inclusion as well as the response of members of the receiving society. This would enhance our understanding of the integration as a two-way process.

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